

# ZUDORA In the Twenty Million Dollar Mystery

## HAROLD MAC GRATH



ZUDORA AND STORM ENJOYED THEMSELVES THOROUGHLY

The remarkable adventures of the charming Zudora will be portrayed by Harold MacGrath in the succeeding chapters. This photo serial is being shown in the leading moving picture theaters by the Thanhouser Film corporation. Among those participating are Marguerite Snow, Mary Elizabeth Purley, James Crane, in the new role of reporter Jerry; Sidney Bracey, and Frank Farrington.

## SYNOPSIS.

Zudora, heiress to \$20,000,000, is placed in the guardianship of her uncle, Hassam Ali, a mystic. Hassam Ali is determined to secure the girl's fortune for himself, and when she becomes of age he makes every effort to bring about her death. Zudora is in love with a young lawyer, John Storm, and she seeks permission of her miserly uncle to marry him. Hassam Ali promises to grant her wish provided she shall solve twenty of his cases. Zudora solves nine of the cases when her uncle dies, and she is released of her pledge.

At the death of her uncle, Zudora has another suitor for her hand—Jim Baird, a man who has been playing as double to Hassam Ali, but who, through sincere love of the girl, gives up the false life and goes back to his work as a newspaper reporter.

No longer obliged to solve Hassam Ali's cases Zudora now confronts the greatest mystery of all, which is the mystery of her own life and the ambition to secure the vast fortune of \$20,000,000 left her. On looking through her uncle's papers she also finds that her father left her an interest in a diamond mine, and Storm and Baird both lend assistance in trying to regain for her possession of this estate, which is being appropriated by rogues.

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## CHAPTER XV.

## THE ROBBERY OF THE RUBY CORONET.

HUNT and Baird had at least found out where the Zudora mine was, but the rightful ownership still hung in the air. Hunt also declared that the false claimants had been cognizant of their trip to Montana and had tried to push them off the board. The best thing they now could do would be to wait for some fresh move against Zudora. Sooner or later they would make another attempt against her life or liberty. Hunt warned both Zudora and Storm that if anything turned up of a suspicious character to notify him at once.

About this time Copeland, the banker and broker who had handled various deposits from Zudora and at whose bank she had her safety deposit box, concluded to make his wife a fine birthday gift. This gift was a handsome coronet of rubies. Mrs. Copeland possessed many splendid jewels, but this latest addition surpassed them all. Wonderful, she wanted to show her friends how generous her husband was; so she decided to give a dance. Among those who received invitations were Miss Du Val, Capt. Radcliffe, and Bruce. Mrs. Copeland knew Miss Du Val, but not the other two. They were business friends of her husband, and as such she accepted them.

Zudora and Storm were invited because Mrs. Copeland looked upon them two as friends. It had been some time since Zudora and Storm had gone to any social function, and naturally she was excited. She was in no wise in mourning for her uncle, the late Hassam Ali, but she had gone nowhere for weeks. The color and music would be a great relief to her. She had been through so much that she had begun to crave a little pleasurable excitement.

On the night of the dance Mrs. Copeland decided to put on the new coronet, together with her collar and bracelets of diamonds. She was just about to do so when she noticed that the coronet was not in the safe. She looked at the door. But in her hurry

she left on the dresser a little book which contained the combination numbers.

The moment she was gone the maid pounced upon the book and thumbed it hurriedly. She had seen this little book many times, but until now she had never been able to get her hands upon it. She knew that it contained the combination to the wall safe. She turned her apron over and jotted down the numbers on the linen. She replaced the book in the identical spot she had found it and left the room.

Baird was glad to see Zudora and Storm. He chatted with them until the dancing began, then he wandered out among the smokers.

Capt. Radcliffe and Bruce presently drew together.

"Did you see that fellow Baird?" asked Bruce.

"Yes, and he has his eye on me. But I don't think he connects me with the man he met on the road to the Zudora mines."

"Well, I want to keep out of his sight. I've an idea that he has placed me," said the diamond smuggler.

"What if he has placed you? He hasn't anything like proof."

"He saw me go into Dr. Mann's front door and out the rear. I'm certain of that."

"If he had been certain you'd have heard from him long before this. Take my word for it. Now, come along. I'm going to take a quiet stroll upstairs. This house looks like good hunting one of these days."

"You would rob Copeland?" whispered Bruce.

"I would take the pennies off a dead man's eyes if I needed them. Come on."

The two worthies mounted the stairs casually, but once in the upper hall they became alert.

"I'll try this room here," said Radcliffe. "It looks as if it might be Mrs. Copeland's boudoir. Gough if any one comes in sight."

Radcliffe slipped into Mrs. Copeland's boudoir and glanced about with the skilled eye of a man who finds it necessary to observe all things. He saw the safe in the wall and examined it. That magnificent coronet and that collar of diamonds would repose in yonder safe. But it would be a hard nut to crack.

His glance swept over the top of the dresser and rested upon the little book. Such things were generally valuable. In a moment he was thumbing it. When he came across the combination he was delighted. He quickly transferred it to a slip of paper, stowed it away, and started for the door just as Bruce coughed his warning. He was safely in the hall by the time the maid came along.

"The gentlemen's coat room?" he asked. "The door opposite, sir."

"Thanks," said Radcliffe.

He and Bruce entered the coat room as a matter of precaution, then went downstairs again. Radcliffe would have been greatly astonished could he have glanced into Mrs. Copeland's boudoir ten minutes later. The butler, having been of his own, was at that moment copying down the combination of the wall safe from the little book the mistress had forgotten to her room.

Zudora and Storm, however, enjoyed themselves thoroughly. What with the music and the dancing and the pleasure they found in each other's company the rest of the world seemed very well lost. On the way home, however, Zudora expressed her dislike for Capt. Radcliffe. She was quite positive that she had seen him before, under unfavorable circumstances. She wondered if Copeland knew anything about the man.

"Where do you think you have seen him?" asked Storm, curiously.

"That's the baffling part of it. I know I've seen him, but beyond that things are hazy. I don't like him. I'm certain of that much."

"I wish you'd marry me straight off and

let me take you away where you'd forget all these unhappy affairs."

"Ah, John, my father was a sportsman. He never gave up a fight, and neither shall I. It isn't the money, though, that's always handy; it's the thought of dishonest people getting the benefit of what is mine. Until I've won or lost, I prefer to remain as I am. I've caused you enough trouble, John, as it is. No one has any enmity toward you. It is I."

"Well, I guess I'll hang around," said John, pleasantly, though he did not experience any particular pleasure at that moment.

"You might change your mind, you know; and when you do I want to be at hand."

"You're very good to me, John."

"Millions and millions of money!" he murmured. "I'm beginning to hate money."

"So am I. So let's say no more about it."

The following day, at Mrs. Du Val's, plans were completed for the robbing of the Copeland wall safe. Bruce and Radcliffe

agreed that the attempt should be made that night, as the Copelands had spoken of going into the city for a night at the opera. They sent two lesser crooks to watch the premises.

And while they watched they saw shadows against the curtains of Mrs. Copeland's room. At first they believed that the Copelands had not gone into town, but a minute or two later one of the shadows rolled up, revealing the butler and the maid.

Mr. Hook had been butler in the Copeland house for about six weeks. He had been highly recommended by Marie, the maid, who had served her mistress with apparent loyalty for two years. All for the purpose that was now being enacted. Hook was merely her partner in crime, and both were wanted by the police in other cities.

The butler went directly to the safe in the wall, turned the knob the specific number of times, and swung open the door.

"There they are, Marie. This is the last job. We'll hike across the pond and live in comfort for the rest of our days. I never could find out where the mines kept that little book, and we both fell on it last night. Some luck, eh? Thirty thousand dollars; as easy as turning over your hand. Give me the handbag."

He dumped the jewels into the bag, but the ruby coronet was too large for the receptacle.

He dropped, almost into the hands of the two men watching him.

"I'll have to carry that under my coat. Now, then, give me a kiss and I'll be off to Riddon's saloon to hide the stuff. We'll have to split the swag three ways; but we'll pull down a clear \$20,000, or I don't know our Uncle Isadore."

"Hurry! I'll follow just as soon as I can."

"Right-o! Now, to make it look real and lifelike, I'll drop out of the window here. I've a pair of the master's shoes on, and that'll bunk the bulls until we can make a safe getaway."

He dropped, almost into the hands of the two men watching him. But he was too agile and quick for them. He was off like a deer. They gave chase heartily enough, rather certain that Capt. Radcliffe would miss his haul if they did not catch this awkward butler. Hook, by dodging and doubling, succeeded in eluding them. He had in mind to hide the jewels and return some other night for them. He wasn't anxious to

kind of a fence, and he at once decided to investigate.

On second thought the maid concluded not to fly at present, but to announce the robbery the moment the Copelands returned. For a while at least they would not suspect her of complicity. Nor did they. The maid wept. The butler was evidently guilty. And she had trusted him! She had even promised to marry him. He was a thief. It was all so very well done that the Copelands believed her implicitly.

Meantime Bruce wended his way quickly to a house he knew of. It was a rendezvous of his own, not known by his confederates. In the library over the mantel hung a fine pair of antlers. These covered a hole in the brick chimney, and into this hole Bruce deposited the ruby coronet. He could wait now until the whole affair had blown over. On one of his European trips he could dispose of it for far more than he could safely get in America. He was well satisfied with himself.

The next day Detective Hunt learned of the robbery, but as he had not yet been approached in regard to it merely made note of the salient features of the case. He busied himself with several photographs and selected one of them. Later he would use this likeness as a disguise.

Baird came in breezily.

"They've put me on the Copeland robbery," he announced. "What do you think about it?"

"I guess the butler is the boy."

"If I can land a scoop on this story my little old pay envelope will get a boost."

"You're a queer card, Baird. You've got the stuff in you. You once lived like a prince, and yet you're willing to work hard for an honest living. Well, if the Copelands come to me I'll take you in on it."

"Any news on the other business?"

"Nothing you can put your hand on. I have a lot of suspicions, but I'm not going to tell you what they are. I wish I'd been at the Copelands the other night. There might have been a face there I could have placed."

The clerk came in. "Lady and gentlemen to see you, sir."

"Name?"

"Copeland."

"Send them in," said Hunt, smiling. "I've an idea our friend Storm sent them here. Don't do any talking."

"All right," laughed Baird.

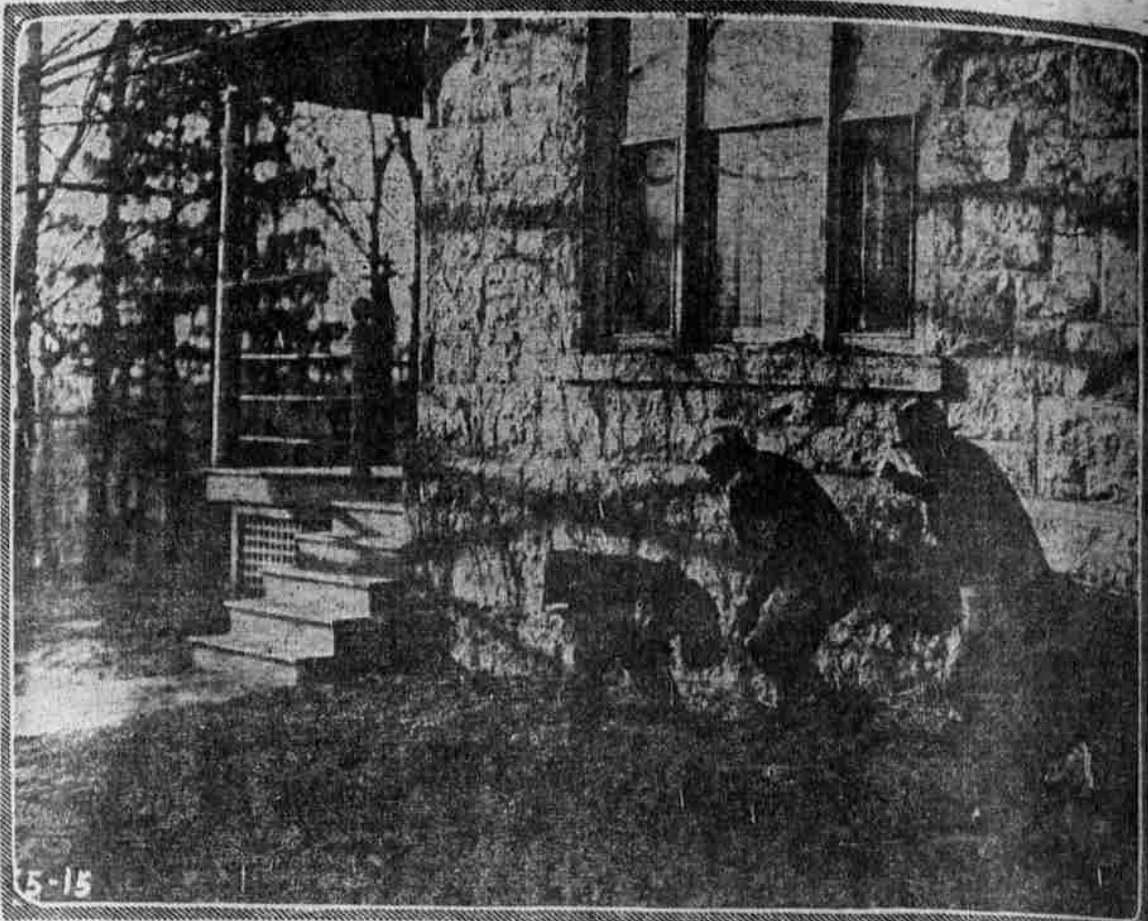
The upshot of the visit resulted in Hunt accepting the case. He went up to the house at once and went over the ground thoroughly. He quizzed the maid narrowly, but she was letter perfect in her part. She fouled and disarmed him apparently; but he took careful notice of her features and her height and color. There were tracks all over the lawn, so many, in fact, that he could learn nothing in this direction.

That afternoon Mr. Hook entered the grogshop of Mr. Riddon, greeted the barkeeper cordially, and proceeded upstairs to a room he had previously engaged. There he met the maid Marie and they laughed over the successful manner in which the detective had been fooled.

Downstairs Capt. Radcliffe entered the bar, sat down by a window, and ordered a drink, pretending to be interested in that morning's paper. Sooner or later he expected to encounter Mr. Hook. The captain had a good deal of patience when necessity required it.

Now, one thing Detective Hunt did find, and that was Hook's own memorandum book. In that book he learned that the butler's "hangout" was Riddon's saloon in Ramona avenue, Bronx. So at the same time that Radcliffe read his stale newspaper Hook stirred with the maid upstairs, Hunt and Baird stopped on the opposite side of the street and eyed the name on the saloon windows.

"This is the shop, sure enough," declared



HE DROPPED ALMOST INTO THE HANDS OF THE TWO MEN WATCHING HIM.

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"This is the shop, sure enough," declared

Hunt. "Suppose we stroll over and see what's inside."

Radcliffe chanced to look out of a side spot in the window and saw them. He was in a quandary for a moment. But he had the worry for nothing. The detective and the reporter immediately sought the stairs and Capt. Radcliffe, as he went out the rear door, cursed himself for not going up the stairs himself.

There's always a slip 'twixt the eye and the lip. If Marie hadn't wanted a setting brooch which she admired among the Copeland collection and if Hook hadn't anxiously refused to surrender it, they would not have quarreled, their voices would not have risen. The sound of their dispute was music to Hunt's ears. Quickly he slipped a key from his bunch of skeleton keys, slipped it into the lock, gave a twist, and unlocked the door, followed by Baird.

Hook, without waiting to explain his visitors' names and business, plunged toward a window and leaped. Baird followed him fearlessly.

Hunt turned upon the maid suddenly.

"I thought I'd find you here," he scolded up the stolen jewels. "Where is the ruby coronet?"

"I don't know," whimpered Marie. "He lost it in jumping the wall the night of the robbery."

Hunt did not doubt this. The tracks at the Copeland place had given evidence of a struggle.

"Where is his hangout?" he demanded.

"I don't know."

"All right," Hunt took out a pair of handcuffs. "Want to ride back to town with these on instead of diamonds?"

Marie reluctantly told him where he would doubtless find her lover. After all, if Hook hadn't made such a row over giving her what she wanted of the loot neither would he have been in their predicament.

"It's the old Blaisdell house at Highwood."

"Go back to your mistress and stay there. I can't find your phiz anywhere, as I'm going to give you a chance. But if you're back to me I'll put you over."

When Hunt reached the Blaisdell place he was met by Baird, more or less out of wind.

"Did you get them all?"

"All but the ruby piece. I've an idea that it's in this joint. Where's Hook?"

"He got by me somehow. I shouldn't wonder if that old house had a dozen or more secret passages; but I couldn't find any. Let's get back to town with the stuff. We can come back here later."

To this Hunt readily agreed.

When they did come back they encountered many thrilling things, as surprising as they were thrilling. Zudora and John had gone out for a spin and the machine had broken down near the Blaisdell place. Bruce, who had witnessed the accident, made up his mind to a chair in the library, while Storm was dragged down into the cellar.

Bruce was in high feather. He had been only the rubies but the girl they had been after ever since she got away from the Mann's private insane asylum. But now have to be hatched before you can come your chickens.

Hunt and Baird returned at once after they had given the bag of jewelry to Mrs. Copeland. They found Zudora, to their amazement, struggling in the Mann chair.

"The ruby coronet is behind these curtains," she cried. "They took John downstairs. Go to him quickly!"

So all the jewels—and perhaps do you precious Zudora—were returned. But Mrs. Zudora was distinctly dissatisfied with the structure. The crooks had slipped through his fingers.

(TO BE CONTINUED)